

Breeding Records of the Grey Honeyeater in the Upper Lyons River district.—On August 28, 1978, on stony ground along a mulga creek near Julia Bore (23°39'S, 116°09'E) near Edmund Station, my attention was attracted by a short, high-pitched jingling song being given by a small bird flitting around the top of a eucalypt bush *A. tetragonophylla*. Through binoculars, the songster and another bird close to it were identified as Grey Honeyeaters *Conopophila whitei*. The short song-phrase, given both in the air and when perched, was quite different from high, silvery contact calls which I had heard from this species on a few previous occasions near Wiluna. As I watched, one of the honeyeaters moved out towards me and promptly dropped onto a tiny cup-shaped nest, which was suspended on an outermost twig. Shortly afterwards, S. Bennett, J. Masters, V. Read and I inspected the nest: a little over a metre from the ground, roughly 6 cm wide and deep, sparingly constructed of grass leaves held together (mostly externally) by large sticky blobs of pure white seed covering. It contained a single egg, which was white, marked with a broad corona of reddish-brown spots towards the large end. We left the site and the birds returned almost immediately, one again settling to brood. J. M. commented that from the appearance of the egg, incubation had begun quite recently. He was able to return to the site on a further three occasions during the following eight days, each time encountering a brooding bird on the single egg, which was obviously developed by the date of his last visit, September 5.

The Grey Honeyeater is a very little known, but perhaps widespread bird of dry Acacia woodland. Accounts by Whitlock (1910) and Wells (1977) of breeding near Wiluna and Yalgoo respectively constitute the only previous published details of nests and young. It is interesting to note the close similarities in the form and position of the few nests yet discovered. The two previously described clutches have both consisted of two eggs rather than one, but as yet there is no published record of more than a single young in or away from the nest. (See below).

Of just four Grey Honeyeaters which I have seen really well in life, none has shown any sign of a white eye-ring or yellowish on the wing. From the descriptions of Whitlock (1910) and Wells (1977) it seems that these features may be confined to the juvenile. Adults in the field appear as plain grey and white tiny honeyeaters, without any facial pattern. Major field marks are few: head, back and breast cold grey, belly and flanks white, wing-coverts and tertiaries plain greyish, primaries dark (often contrasting with the white flanks), wing-tip projections short, whole of rump and upper tail grey, with the tail feathers clearly tipped with white when fresh, less so when abraded. On one of the birds I noticed the short bill to be blue-grey at the base.

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At 0750 hrs. on September 1, 1978, I observed an adult Grey Honeyeater with one juvenile, approximately 20 km SW of Edmund Station along the track to Hawk's Nest Bore. The birds were in a narrow band of open-scrub of Acacias to 4 m tall, growing along a dry creek bed. The surrounding area was a tall shrubland dominated by Acacias and Eremophilas. The weather was fine and sunny with excellent light although the birds were usually in shadow.

The adult bird was seen first. It flew to and fed a juvenile which had been sitting quietly in dense foliage. The juvenile was free-flying although the rectrices and remiges were not fully grown. When approached by the adult, it begged by gaping and drooped and fluttered its wings. No calls were heard. Food items could not be identified with certainty but appeared to be small insects gleaned from the foliage. Both birds were observed for about two minutes, during which the juvenile was fed twice before both flew and could not be relocated.

The adult bird was uniformly grey/brown above, darker on the primaries and tail and light grey below with a whitish throat. I did not observe

a light eye-ring on the adult, nor did I notice any yellowish wash on the primaries. The juvenile was similarly coloured but had a narrow off-white eye-ring and a fleshy light orange gape. I did not notice a yellowish wash on the nape and throat as described by Serventy and Whittell (1976) and Officer (1964), although I did not specifically look for this character.

—PETER MENKHORST, Victoria.

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Observations on the Nest and Young of the Pheasant Coucal.—During a botanical research trip to the Mitchell Plateau (lat. 14°47'S, long. 125°48'E.) N.W. Kimberley, in the wet season of February 1979, we found two nests both containing young of the Pheasant Coucal (*Centropus phasianinus*). The first was noticed on February 5 when we disturbed a bird which flew up from the ground. After searching the vicinity the nest was discovered in a tall, dense stand of grass up to 1.5 m high, growing under the Fan Palm (*Livistona eastonii*) on grader spoil at the edge of a disused grid line. The locality was where Airfield Swamp overflows into the headwaters of Camp Creek. The nest was dome-shaped, 40 cm high and constructed out of the two principal grass species (*Themeda australis* and *Coelorachis rotboellioides*) growing there (Fig. 2). The centre of a clump of *Themeda* had been pushed aside about 5 cm from the ground to create a platform for the nest. On this a layer of *Coelorachis* 8 cm thick

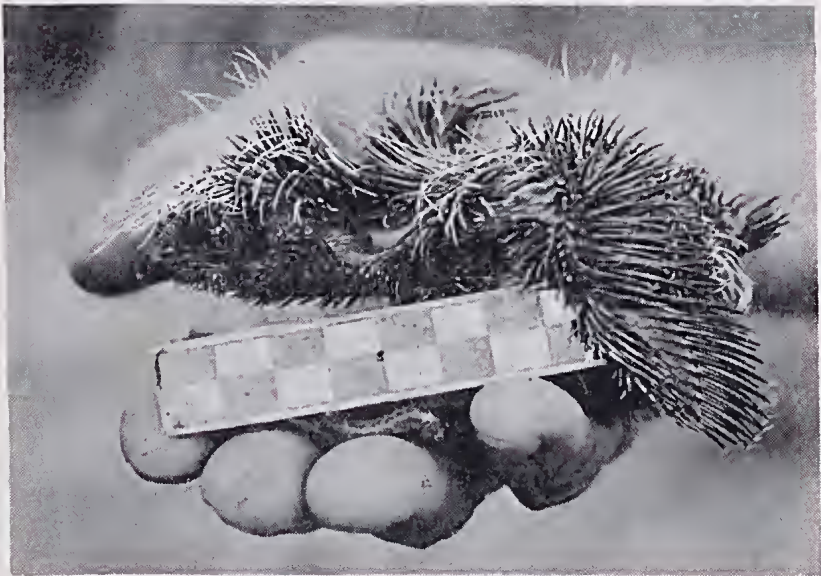


Fig. 1.—Young of Pheasant Coucal after removal from nest. Scale is in cm.